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From: editor@mountainwestnews.org
Sent: Thur 8/27/2015 7:30:32 PM
Subject: Mountain West News Daily Newsletter

Bighorn Mountains

Photo courtesy of
Rick and Susie
Graetz

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Mountain West News is a
program of the
O'Connor Center for the Rocky
Mountain West at
The University of Montana

Thursday,
Aug. 27, 2015

Produced by Shellie Nelson, MW News Editor

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Editor's notes:

In the **Rockies today**, as the White House rolled out new initiatives to move the nation's system of centralized power production to decentralized, renewable energy production, a Montana company is building what will be the largest battery of its kind for an Ontario solar-power project designed to balance the flow of power to the grid.

Barbara Theroux of Fact &
Fiction reviews "[The Oregon](#)

The initiative announced Monday were aimed to incentivizing businesses and consumers to produce more of their own power, and Hecate Energy, a leading developer of solar- and wind-power projects, awarded Columbia Falls-based ViZn Energy Systems to build what the U.S. Energy Department says will be the largest battery of its kind in North America and Europe when it ships in 2016.

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Sage grouse are in the news as well, with U.S. Department of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announcing another \$200 million in funding to protect the species and its habitat, and U.S. Bureau of Land Management Neil Kornze was in Idaho, taking a tour of the area burned by the Soda Fire, which severely damaged 37,000 acres of "core" sagebrush habitat, categorized as the best for the bird, and 168,000 acres of habitat characterized as the next best.

There is more information being released by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on the August 5 mine blowout in Colorado, including concerns about the long-term effect sediment from that spill may have on land and water in the spill's path.

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Quote of the day:

"It's crucial for us in our area to be able to grow and develop and sustain what we have. Some of the wells in the area have dropped about 5 feet per year for the last 10 years."

Paul Monroe, general manager Central Iron County Water Conservancy District, on why the Utah county is pursuing its own 50-mile, \$150-million pipeline project to provide water over the next couple of decades.
- Salt Lake Tribune

Rockies today

Montana company to build North America's largest flow battery
Columbia Falls-based ViZn Energy Systems won the contract for Hecate Energy to build a zinc-iron redox flow battery system that, when completed, will be the largest of its type in North America. Hecate Energy is a developer of solar power projects and will use the battery for grid-balancing services.

Flathead Beacon; August 27

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New energy initiatives in U.S. focus on steps consumers can take

The package of energy initiatives rolled out Monday by the Obama administration incentivizes businesses and consumers to conserve energy, and to produce their own power, nudging the United States from the current system of centralized power production to decentralized, renewable energy production.

Christian Science Monitor; August 25

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Strong dollar, China's woes hammer Montana's timber industry

This year began with strong promise for Montana's lumber industry, but the surge in the value of the dollar and diminished demand for lumber from China have slowed down the market for U.S. producers, although the demand for plywood and fiberboard remains strong.

Flathead Beacon; August 27

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Wyoming governor makes ESA reform a priority

Gov. Matt Mead is the new chairman of the Western Governors' Association, and the Wyoming governor held a news conference on Wednesday to announce that he will work closely with federal lawmakers to reform the Endangered Species Act during his one-year term in that position.

Casper Star-Tribune; August 25

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USDA Secretary Vilsack pledges \$200M in additional aid for

sage grouse

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack is in Oregon today, where he will make a formal announcement today about an additional \$200 million in funding to protect greater sage grouse in the American West, whether or not the species is put on the endangered species list.

Portland Oregonian (AP); August 27

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BLM director vows to reseed, restore Idaho lands burned by wildfire

On Wednesday, U.S. Bureau of Land Management Director Neil Kornze toured the 279,000-acre area burned by the Soda Fire on the Idaho-Oregon border, where he said that the federal agency will reseed and reclaim the area as part of the agency's commitment to protect sage grouse habitat to keep the species off the federal endangered species list. A sidebar to this article provides additional wildfire information, as well as air-quality advisories in place in Idaho.

Idaho Statesman; August 27

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Washington wildfire creeps closer to B.C. border

Changing winds on Wednesday put the Stickpin fire in Washington state on a path to move into British Columbia, where higher winds predicted for Thursday prompted the province to put 1,600 residents and over 700 homes in areas south of Grand Forks and rural areas outside the B.C. city and Christina Lake on alert to be ready to evacuate.

Vancouver Sun; August 27

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Wildfire smoke keeps aerial support from aiding Washington firefighters

Heavy smoke from large wildfires burning east of the Cascade Mountains in Washington state is hampering efforts to control those wildfires as visibility is too poor to allow aerial firefighting work. The Republic fire near the Canadian border is now 262 square miles in size and the Okanogan Complex, the state's largest in history, grew to 438 square miles.

Idaho Statesman (AP); August 27

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EPA release more documents on Colorado mine spill

On Wednesday, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released more documents and photos of the spill from the Gold King Mine in Colorado that indicated the agency's top concern was the long-term effects of the metallic sediment left behind after the spill.

Denver Post; August 27

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Report details cause of Colorado mine blowout

The results of an internal investigation done by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency of the August 5 mine blowout in Colorado indicated that a lack of testing done to determine the volume of water captured in the mine led to an underestimation of the pressure exerted by that water. The agency cited time and expense as reasons for not doing the testing.

Denver Post; August 27

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Water

Utah county has its own pipeline plans

According to a 2009 U.S. Geological Survey Study, the aquifer underlying Iron County is seriously overdrawn, with area users pumping out 3 billion gallons of water annually that is not replaced by precipitation and runoff, causing land subsidence across the Utah county, and local officials are working to build a 50-mile, \$150 million pipeline to ease the area's water shortage to augment water resources, a process

that will take years to complete.

Salt Lake Tribune; August 27

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Opinion

Utah decision on lobbyist space in Capitol shows misplaced priorities

Thank goodness for Gov. Gary Herbert for stepping in to ensure that the American Legion, which has had office space in the Utah Capitol since World War I, will continue to have an office in the building, but the fact that the governor had to step in to keep the veterans' group in the building after all but one of the legislators and other elected officials on the Capitol Preservation Board voted Monday to move the Legion's offices to make more room for lobbyists is a situation that should give voters and the folks whom they elect -- pause.

Salt Lake Tribune; August 27

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Beyond the region

Low oil prices, debt obligations could increase energy firm bankruptcies

Using data compiled by Bloomberg, analysts said that \$550 billion in bonds and loans come due for energy companies over the next five years, with \$72 billion US coming due this year, about \$85 billion in 2016 and \$129 billion in 2017. American companies owing 20 percent of the debt due this year and Chinese companies owing 12 percent due this year.

Calgary Herald (PDTECHINTEGRATION); August 27

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